



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Sensenbrenner Introduces Bipartisan Voting Rights Act Extension Legislation Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wis.) today introduced bipartisan legislation that would extend the Voting Rights Act for 25 years. H.R. 9, “The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006” (VRARA), will be the subject of two hearings before the House Judiciary Constitution Subcommittee on Thursday, May 4th.

This legislation is cosponsored by House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Judiciary Ranking Member John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), Judiciary Constitution Subcommittee Chairman Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Mel Watt (D-N.C.), Judiciary Constitution Ranking Member Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), and Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.). Identical bipartisan legislation was introduced and sponsored today in the Senate by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Penn.), Judiciary Ranking Member Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).

Chairman Sensenbrenner stated, “Our sacred Constitution guarantees that an American citizen cannot be kept from exercising his or her God-given right to vote because of race or color. As John Lewis and so many others know, that right rang hollow for many Americans for nearly a century.

“A duty to support the Constitution – and a commitment to eliminating some of the painful vestiges of our Nation’s past – led me to shepherd the House Republican Voting Rights Act efforts in 1982. It is that same purpose that leads me to introduce another 25-year Voting Rights Act extension in the House today. While I proudly display in my Washington office one of the pens President Ronald Reagan used to sign the 1982 extension, the fruits of this effort can best be seen on the faces of those participating in the political process and actively serving in it.

“Though the Voting Rights Act has been enormously successful, we know our work is not

yet complete. Discrimination in the electoral process continues to exist and threatens to undermine the progress that has been made over the last forty years.

“This legislation ensures that the gains made by minorities over the last forty years are not jeopardized and that minority citizens will continue to be protected over the next twenty-five years. I’m proud this legislation, H.R. 9, has such strong bipartisan support and I look forward to having the House Judiciary Committee and the full House consider it later this month.”

Brief Highlights of H.R. 9:

- Renews and strengthens the Voting Rights Act for an additional 25 years.
- Restores Section 5 to its original strength, preventing voting changes that are enacted with any discriminatory purpose from being precleared under Section 5.
- Extends the Federal observer program for an additional 25 years.
- Because Federal examiners have not been used since 1980, H.R. 9 will allow Section 6 to expire.

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